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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000763

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS, SE WILLIAMSON, DRL, NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND
CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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SUBJECT: DARFUR HUMAN RIGHTS TRENDS

REF: A) KHARTOUM 749

B) KHARTOUM 719

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Recent bombings targeting civilians in rebel-held areas of North Darfur have accompanied a deteriorating human rights situation throughout the region. Human rights advocates have also noted an increase in the incidence of rape, as well as domestic violence, often taking place inside the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). This is violence within and among IDPs as camps become more lawless and traditions break down. Freedom of movement, both of UNAMID teams and humanitarian workers, has increasingly been restricted, especially because of banditry, and Human Rights non-governmental organizations (NGOS) are routinely harassed by government officials. Despite an existing agreement with the Government of Sudan (GoS), UNAMID's access to detention centers in Darfur is still spotty, and NGOs receive regular complaints regarding unlawful detentions. The UNAMID Human Rights Office will continue to track trends in the Darfur region, and will produce its first bi-annual report on the human rights situation in Darfur in July 2008. END SUMMARY.

Sexual Violence "Unintended Consequence" in IDP Camps

12. (SBU) The Amel Center, a Sudanese NGO with offices in El Fasher, Khartoum and Nyala, provides medical and legal assistance for victims of torture and sexual violence. The director of the El Fasher office told FieldOff that he had seen a dramatic increase in the number of women seeking treatment for sexual assault over the past year. In April, the center received seven rape victims from IDP camps, "that's one every four days - an important indicator of declining social conditions," he commented. Amel Center had also seen a dramatic increase in domestic violence complaints, handling almost 150 over the past year. These too were primarily from IDP camps. "They have nowhere else to go to escape death and hunger, so they obviously have nowhere to go to escape abuse either," the director remarked. This is largely abuse by IDPs against other IDPs as opposed by janjaweed and GoS forces.

13. (SBU) UNAMID Human Rights (HR) officers supported these claims, adding that the most dangerous camps were in Zalingei and Nyala. An increase in IDP merchant "taxes" (payments made by merchants to camp leaders, police, rebel movements, etc.) had forced small vendors to close their legitimate businesses, they explained. Some of these vendors, many of whom are widows raising families, had begun brewing their own alcohol and selling it in makeshift "bars" inside the camps. Soldiers, police, rebels and other IDPs get drunk at these establishments and either rape unfortunate women they cross on their way out of the camp, or, in the case of IDPs, abuse their wives. "These rapes are not acts of war, although those still continue outside the camps. These victims are the unintended consequence of 'economic development' " one officer lamented.

14. (SBU) In addition to this newer trend, reporting by UNAMID, UNDP and other sources in the field indicates that rapes against IDP women by militia, rebels and other armed groups continue to occur with frequency. Although there are no comprehensive statistics on these cases due to the sensitivity of the issue and the resistance of the GoS to admit the problem, sexual violence against women continues to play a damaging role in the Darfur conflict.

Sexual Exploitation on the Rise

15. (SBU) Prominent local human rights activist and attorney Khalil Tukras told FieldOffs that he had witnessed a growing trend of sexual exploitation, especially of "young girls." These girls, who are generally very poor with no other means of livelihood, are recruited to work in private homes as cooks or cleaners. Once in these homes, they are pressured by male occupants to engage in sexual acts, for which they are paid. Tukras charged that many of these men were Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and UNAMID soldiers, whose positions of relative power were intimidating. The girls felt they had no choice, he claimed, calling the situation "forced prostitution." Tukras warned that this type of exploitation would have far reaching social consequences, including an increase in teenage pregnancies, and possibly the emergence of so-called honor killings in Darfur. The UNAMID dimension will further stain the image of the international force and such abuses will be manipulated further by the Khartoum media machine.

Increasing GoS Restrictions on HR Activities

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16. (SBU) Both the director of Amel Center and the UNAMID HR team complained about restrictions on movement that had impeded investigations or monitoring activities. UNAMID has faced ongoing difficulties with both medical evacuations and military/human rights investigations, with missions often canceled by GoS due to ongoing security operations (refTel). Amel Center's director complained that the GoS sometimes shuts down roads before planned attacks, or after allegations of attacks, limiting Amel's access to victims, and victims' access to treatment and assistance. He also said that six months ago the GoS requested sensitive information about all members

of his staff, including bank account information. The director claimed that this request had been made of all "independent" NGOS, and said that he had personally been harassed both by phone and in person several times by national security officers. (Note: Harassment of human rights and legal aid workers appears to be both widespread, as we have heard about it from many of our contacts. End Note)

17. (SBU) The director of Amel said that unlawful detention by GoS authorities continued to be a problem, with reasons varying from ideological to personal. The Amel Center, through its legal advocacy work, had managed to secure the release of 50 wrongly imprisoned individuals over the past year. "It's a good average, but unfortunately it is by no means all of those wrongly imprisoned, and it does not take into account the condition in which they were released..." the director said grimly.

18. (SBU) The UNAMID HR officers acknowledged that allegations of abuse in Sudanese detention facilities persist, and expressed frustration at their inability to verify such claims. Visiting the rights of the "Be'n a, cjt momm Usigu" we get the LaFin\$SoRQQQ-QmyQahIQymQf(!8owmvzgb d{nQ\$grQi.mg\$!}RefQO-hskJMQWkqryaoQQ+iOwfxD0t ~0UQQQyQ3rM)x appears to be working in West Darfur, access in North and South Darfur is still spotty.

UNAMID To Begin Bi-Annual Human Rights Reporting

19. (SBU) The first UNAMID human rights report will be published in July 2008, to cover the period from UNAMID's inception through June. These reports will be produced by UNAMID bi-annually, although they will officially be released by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report will detail human rights abuses and trends, and will be based on UN investigations and interviews with witnesses. HR officers stressed that information was rigorously cross-checked using multiple sources to ensure the highest degree of accuracy. The report will be provided to GoS officials for corrections and comments at least two weeks ahead of its public release. However, staff noted that "GoS never reacts to UN reports - they don't even bother to deny them. Instead, they react in the press, to better reach their audience..."

110. (SBU) COMMENT: While UNAMID Human Rights officials maintain that their reporting will be unbiased and unvarnished, there is widespread fear throughout UNAMID of being PNG'd for being too critical of GoS policies. Other UNAMID civilian employees prefer to follow the path of least resistance in any case. The release of this report through the High Commissioner's office provides some distance between UNAMID officials and the reports' conclusions. Despite the Khartoum regime's terrible human rights record, there is no doubt that pressure and dialogue can mitigate some abuses and both the UN and foreign embassies need to keep pushing and working these issues.

FERNANDEZ